Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a polynucleotide having at least 95% sequence identity to SEQ ID NO:1 ~~encoding a polypeptide having at least 90% identity to SEQ ID NO:2~~, wherein introduction of the nucleic acid into a plant to suppress gene expression results in earlier flowering in the plant compared to a plant not transformed with the nucleic acid.

8-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently amended) A method of decreasing flowering time in a plant, the method comprising introducing into the plant an expression cassette comprising a plant promoter operably linked to a polynucleotide having at least 95% sequence identity to SEQ ID NO:1, wherein the introduced nucleic acid sequence is transcribed, resulting in an earlier flowering time when compared to a plant not transcribing the nucleic acid sequence ~~encoding a polypeptide having at least 90% identity to SEQ ID NO:2~~.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) The method of claim 14, wherein the polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO:1 ~~polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2~~.

17-19. (Canceled)

20. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein the expression cassette is introduced into the plant through a sexual cross.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently amended) The isolated nucleic acid of claim 7, wherein the polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO:1 ~~polypeptide comprises the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2~~.

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein the plant is a rice plant.

24. (Currently amended) The method of claim 14, wherein the polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO:1 ~~polypeptide comprises SEQ ID NO:2~~.

25. (Previously added) The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 7, wherein the polynucleotide comprises SEQ ID NO:1.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently amended) An expression cassette comprising a promoter operably linked to a heterologous polynucleotide comprising a nucleic acid sequence having at least 95% sequence identity to ~~at least 100 contiguous nucleotides of~~ SEQ ID NO:1, wherein introduction of the expression cassette into a plant to suppress gene expression results in earlier flowering in the plant compared to a plant not transformed with the nucleic acid.

28. (Currently amended) The expression cassette of claim 27, wherein the nucleic acid sequence comprises ~~at least 100 contiguous nucleotides of~~ SEQ ID NO:1.

29. (Previously added) A transgenic plant comprising the expression cassette of claim 27.

30. (Currently amended) The transgenic plant of claim 29 ~~27~~, wherein the nucleic acid comprises ~~at least 100 contiguous nucleotides of~~ SEQ ID NO:1.

31-32. (Canceled)